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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

15 February 1980

MEMORANDUM

Italy: TNF-An Update on GLCM Siting Problems []

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Summary

The selection and approval of Ground-Launched Cruise Missile sites in Italy will probably be delayed by the uncertainties of the Italian domestic political situation. []

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Since obtaining parliamentary approval last December for its decision to participate in the theater nuclear force modernization program, the Cossiga government has been confronted by the growing possibility that its fragile political base might come apart. The Socialists have threatened to withdraw their essential support for the government unless the Christian Democratic congress--which opens this week--sanctions a coalition including both Communists and Socialists. The Christian Democrats intend to ignore the ultimatum, which makes the end of the Cossiga government appear near. Cossiga has been reluctant to tackle the potentially divisive GLCM siting issue in this uncertain political setting. []

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Even before support for Cossiga's government had begun to unravel, Rome had placed restrictions on the size and "visibility" of US site survey teams and reserved the actual selection of sites for the Italian Ministry of Defense. The selection process has not yet begun, but government officials have stated that their decisions will be based on both political and military considerations. Final approval of the sites will fall to the Council of Ministers. Without the threat of a government crisis, this body could conceivably dispose of the issue by Easter.

This memorandum, requested by the National Security Council, was prepared by [] the Western Europe Division, Office of Political Analysis. The paper has been coordinated with the National Intelligence Officer for Western Europe. Research was completed on 14 February 1980. Questions and comments may be addressed to the Chief, Western Europe Division, Office of Political Analysis, []

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The fall of the Cossiga government would almost certainly slow down the process.

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If the Cossiga government does survive, it probably would be in only a caretaker capacity, an arrangement that would permit the parties to wait until after this spring's nationwide local elections to reevaluate their respective positions and undertake what are likely to be protracted negotiations aimed at forming a new government. It is doubtful that a lame duck government would risk making a decision on GLCM siting--particularly if public support for the program erodes because of a lack of progress on arms control. Thus, the final approval of GLCM sites probably will have to await the outcome of what appears to be an inevitable government crisis.

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Distribution: TNF-An Update on GLCM Siting Problems

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